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THE PECULIARITIES

OF

DIVINE REVELATION

IN ITS

EARLIEST STAGE;

OR,

GENESIS FROM A MODERN POINT OF VIEW.

BY REV. CHARLES CHAPMAN, M. A.

A LECTURE;

DELIVERED BEFORE THE YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION OF ZION
CHURCH, AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.



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1871.

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IN THE

LARGEST STAGE

OF

THE HUMAN MIND

JOHN C. BECKET, PRINTER, MONTREAL.

BY REV. CHARLES HAWMAN, A.M.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL
ON THE EVENING OF THE 14TH OF JANUARY, 1871.

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# THE PECULIARITIES OF DIVINE REVELATION

## IN ITS EARLIEST STAGE; OR,

### GENESIS FROM A MODERN POINT OF VIEW.



If I mistake not, there exists in the minds of many readers of the Bible a strange, weird feeling, as they leave, for a season, the orderly events and sequences of modern civilized life, and confront the narratives contained in the book of Genesis. There is something in the novel circumstances there depicted, the commingled orders of beings whose actions are related, and the memorable transactions set forth, so seemingly out of relation to the condition of human society as we know it now, that were not these things found in a Book venerated for ages as a Revelation of the Divine mind, much hesitation would be felt in accepting them as realities; and even as it is, the question secretly lurks in the heart, waiting for expression by another's voice, as to the possibility of these remarkable representations being amenable to the recognized laws of reason and propriety. As hills, and valleys and forests enshrouded in the mysterious dimness of mist, seem to the eye of the traveller to project themselves in ill defined and monstrous forms, unlike those of the sunny land from whence he came, and thus, as he draws near to inspect them, cause his heart to beat with increased and irregular action; so to many adventurers in the sphere of knowledge, coming out of the clear light shed by modern science on ordinary events and persons, the huge proportions and unique obscurity of the leading figures presented in the early Biblical narratives, awaken a sense of awe and wonderment, which are not made to subside by the mere assertion of authority. There is something in our modern life which makes men indisposed to welcome as facts, what appears to lie outside the line of their own experience, and the discussions and controversies of which the Book of Genesis has been the centre, have not it seems to me, tended to bring the thought of the age to the calm and rational repose which I think may be attained, if we will but examine the main points of issue on principles generally admitted, though not always judiciously applied. The time and vigor spent in wrangling over this detail and that debateable item, have borne and can only bear meagre fruit. The questions really at issue are not within the scope of mere grammar, etymology, and superfine criticisms on names, and dates, and numbers. The active contact of the Living God, and a supernatural revelation of spiritual truth which maintains a unity of character amidst great diversity of form, are matters which the niceties of grammatical *finesse* can affect in only a very slight degree. You may rest assured that such matters, if real, are interwoven

with the entire texture of man's mental nature and the broad facts of human history, and hence, must be approached rather from the side of general considerations than of linguistic peculiarities. Many of the criticisms and counter criticisms with which some of the learned have delighted or vexed themselves, remind me of the singular conclave of men, who, being concerned for the interests of both history and science, assembled to discuss whether a certain elevation of earth and rock reputed to be a mountain was really so; and having demonstrated that here and there was to be seen a smooth rounded projection which ought never to be in a natural mountain, that one or two plants were found on a grassy slope which should never exist on a mountain side, and that a stream ran trickling down a ravine which would never be swollen into a torrent,—they were in great doubts; and when, after further most careful scrutinizing of all the little things they could set eyes upon, they arrived at sundry diverse conclusions as to the colour of mosses and lichens in shade and sunshine, their minds were still far from unanimity of conviction. Therefore they dispersed to their homes, calling one another hard names, and, which is most observable, leaving the reputed mountain calm in its repose, and begirt with its familiar clouds as it was before the wise men presumed to pronounce on its existence.

Now, taking the book of Genesis, as being at once, a history of the world prior to the formation of other existing records of the human race, and a revelation of the Divine mind towards man in connection with that history, we must all admit that there are in the exceptional character of many of the facts recorded, and, also, in the matter and form of the Divine communications, peculiarities of a most remarkable type; and therefore, it is only just what we might expect when difficulties are said to be felt, perhaps, with respect to the reception of them, certainly with respect to such an interpretation of them, that they shall be seen to be not only admissible as facts, but also to take a necessary place in the order of God's dealings with mankind. It is only for me to mention the account given of the creation, the testing and subsequent fall of Adam, the formation of Eve, the detailed dialogues between God and man, the longevity of the Antediluvians, the deliverance of Noah from the Deluge, the wonderful replies to Abraham's intercessory prayer, and Jacob's wrestling with the angel, and you perceive what scope there is for modern questioning, and what need there is to lay hold of some fundamental principles which, when applied to these separate through kindred difficulties, shall solve them into one consistent and instructive whole. I do not wish you, however, to suppose that I am in possession of some wonderful philosopher's stone, which others have not, and cannot stumble upon; nor would I have you flatter yourselves that you are, henceforth, to live in an atmosphere so clear that all dimness of apprehension shall have for ever passed away. It is possible that I may say a few things, which have not been brought prominently forward by many who have dealt with these subjects; but after all, we must expect for the present and for reasons most apparent, to see "through a glass darkly," and abide our time in patient hope of more perfect knowledge. There is necessarily much in connexion with such a subject as the communication of God's Will, that cannot be perfectly comprehended. For, both the subject matter of communication, and the form

in which it is to be made, are in the choice, the private, inscrutable choice of the Eternal; and we can only deal with the fact as it comes out to our observation. And, also, we should not overlook the widely practical truth, that Providence trains men by means of obscurity as well as by means of light. The haze which we throw around many subjects, when our children desire to know what we do not think it prudent to reveal, is a healthful dimness stimulating the inventive powers while it awakens their trustful nature, and producing the conviction that there is far more in this life of theirs than relates to the necessities and toys of youth. And we shall fall in with the obvious designs of Providence, and consult our truest interests, if, obtaining just light enough to see the realities of Revelation, we exercise the feelings of filial confidence, and follow on in hope of present dimness yielding to perfect day. And here I cannot but quote the lines of one of the greatest and most devout of living men:—

“Lead kindly light amid the encircling gloom,  
 Lead thou me on,  
 The night is dark and I am far from home,  
 Lead thou me on.  
 Keep thou my feet; I do not wish to see  
 The distant scene—one step enough for me.”

I think I cannot better secure your interests, and make my own views clear, than by making a few propositions almost self evident in their truthfulness, and then point out their bearing upon the various events in the sacred narrative which appears to be singular or inexplicable.

### 1. *The Records themselves are most ancient.*

I speak now of the records themselves, as written authentic histories, and not of the particular events narrated, and I say that so far as investigations have been made, learned men have not fallen upon any manuscript or book that for antiquity can be compared with this book, unless it be the book of Job. Whatever monumental inscriptions may have existed about the date of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, historical portable documents of that date are not to be found. The most ancient Chinese M.S. known to be historical, was written about 600 B. C., that is, in the days of Jeremiah. Most ingenious, and many amusing arguments have been advanced *pro and con*, as to the date and authorship of the book of Genesis; and were I to detail one half of the methods and weapons by which the gentlemen of the Higher Criticism have assailed one another, you would be surprised to see how “doctors differ.” There is one fault which I am always disposed to find with the members, of what, on account of their ruling tendency, may well be termed the “Destructive School of Criticism”; it is, that they too frequently proceed to their work on the gratuitous and unexpressed supposition, that the writers whose books they examine, are literary artists, who compose their works with the skill and taste which characterise literary men. Kaunis, in his history of German Protestantism speaks of “an age” in the course of European life, “which undertook to determine all the forms and institutions of life by the pure *idea*.” In like manner many critics have approached the examination of both sacred and secular books, too strongly influenced by their own notions of what or how the writers ought to have written, without allowing sufficiently for the liberty

and even ability of the writers themselves, to make their productions regular or irregular, finished or unfinished, grammatical or ungrammatical, pervaded by a well sustained unity or broken into unconnected fragments. It must be obvious to any one acquainted with the inner history of Jewish life, that as a rule, the nation was seldom, if ever, in a position to produce a high class of literary or philosophical men; and, although Moses was familiar with Egyptian learning, we must not confound that with the severe literary tastes which appear in Grecian poets and modern historians, and which can only exist in an age of books and critics. Therefore, I say, the primitive simplicity of those times, and the necessary absence of literary criticism, should lead us to expect, in very early documents, peculiarities of arrangement and freedom in the use of terms not observed in more cultivated ages. You will see the bearing of these general observations when I remind you that there has been waged a warm controversy as to whether the book of Genesis was compiled by one or more authors out of several independent documents; and the occasion for this battle of words is said to be found partly in the fragmentary character of some portions, partly in difference of style, and especially because in some parts of the book there are passages in which, the Hebrew word for "Jehovah" is employed, and in others the Hebrew equivalent for "God." Now, it makes little difference to me whether nearly every sentence in the book was originally written by Moses, or whether he simply collected and arranged as best he could, fragmentary documents which had been written by holy men from the days of Noah downwards, as a record of History and Providence. The book bears the mark of God any way. But I must confess that the supposed difficulty arises, according to my judgment, chiefly from a preconceived assumption that, as a correct and punctilious literary man, the author of a Manuscript in those days would be sure to write it off speedily, and with a skilful argument of parts—not in intervals of many years, and as a loose collection of facts; and that he would, of course, use one of the Hebrew expressions for the Divine Name exclusively, or else, if he employed both, it would be in a manner conformable to the perfect order and correct taste of an accomplished writer. I have read both sides of this controversy, and looking fairly at the array of arguments, small and great, I am as convinced as ever that the ascription of this book to the authorship of Moses is the conclusion beset with the fewest difficulties, to say nothing of its being in accordance with the intimations of the New Testament.

Well, then, I revert to my statement, that the book of Genesis is the most ancient document in existence. That being so, observe what follows from this circumstance. *It follows that it was written in the phraseology of a people who lived 3360 years ago, and with a primary view to their instruction and encouragement.* Think you those men and women who came out of the house of bondage were trained to read histories as detailed and eloquent as Macaulay's, and as extensive as Hume's and Smollett's? Do you suppose they were initiated in their youthful days into the deep mysteries of the Silurian, Carboniferous, Oolitic and other geological systems? Had their maidens and mothers listened with rapture to the Principal Dawson of those hoary times, as he, with a mixture of fun and wisdom, expatiated on

Flint and Chalk? I trow not. Yet you may be sure that they had some general notions, expressed in their common forms of speech, of the source of all things from the hand of God; and, consequently, when Moses was authorized to give an authentic and truthful account of the origin of the world, he would do it, not in words you would select, or that would suit the precision of British and American scientific thought in the 19th Century, but in phraseology then commonly used, and so far accommodated to unscientific ideas and modes of utterance, as might be consistent with enforcing the main truth,—*namely*, that God was the author of the material universe. In as much as the Apostle John in the Apocalypse enables us to know the certainty, and get an approximating apprehension of the Heavenly Home, by speaking of golden streets and pearly gates, because otherwise, we with our present modes of thought—materialized, conventional, limited by our organism—should not be able to rise to the absolute conception of the invisible world,—do we not see a wise propriety, a kindly consideration for man's weakness, in Moses being directed to frame the account of creation so as to ensure to ordinary unscientific minds, as they traversed the desert towards Canaan, the conviction that the order of the universe was the out come of the power of the one true God, and also, enable them to think of that order as the result of a steady progress from a state of chaos? I wonder what sort of account of creation some people want. It would be instructive if those who do not think the Mosaic account sufficiently precise, would just write what he ought to have said, remembering that in doing so it must be in the phraseology not of Canadians, nor of Americans, and not for your guidance merely, but in the phraseology of the Israelites on their way to Canaan, and for the instruction of them and of all untutored men in all lands and times. I have the impression that they would scarcely be found, before the bar of public opinion, to have successfully competed with Moses the Man of God.

Thus, also, it would follow from the extreme antiquity of the Records *that great gaps would be likely to occur in the History; and that in subsequent ages, the document would be amended by such editorial insertions as might be considered necessary to render allusions intelligible to later readers.*

—You are aware that ancient chronology, whether Biblical or Monumental, is attended with some degree of uncertainty, in consequence of the great variations that ensue upon very slight modifications of the Hebrew system of numeration, and the diverse judgment arrived at as to the classification of distinct or contemporaneous Egyptian dynasties. But taking the ordinary chronology as correct, you must remember that the book of Genesis covers the history of 2315 years, as long a period as from the days of Plato to the present time. If you couple this fact with the circumstance that that was not a literary age, you will see at once how natural it is to expect in the History just such an absence of detail for centuries as is observable in the ante-diluvian and post-diluvian narrations. And when we find critics feeding themselves, as the hungry wild asses of the desert may be supposed to do after a weary search for congenial food, upon such expressions as Gen. xxxi. 31, "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the land of Israel."—we need not be dismayed, by such

voracious propensities, in endeavouring to hold by the Mosaic authorship; because the insertion of these editorial comments at a later date by some such man as Ezra was just what might be expected to make the most ancient Record intelligible in matters of geography and tribal history to readers of subsequent times.

2. *The Records relate to the beginning of things.*—The early portion of Genesis has to do with the origin of human life, the development of the sense of responsibility, the outward expression of the supremacy of God over the actions of man, the uprising of sin on an otherwise fair earth, and the first symptoms of the presence of a moral disease among men. I dare say there does appear to some minds in comparison with our way of writing history, a strange simplicity in the descriptions given of the creation and the fall of our first parents. These events themselves are so very unlike the highly complicated conditions of life with which we are familiar. The seemingly formal restraints placed upon Adam and Eve, in regard to the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," are unlike anything subsequently experienced by mankind; the free, unfettered converse held between the creature and the Creator, sound to some ears more like the familiar questioning and cross questioning of equals than the communication of thought from the Infinite to the Finite; the vast age attained by the immediate descendants of the first pair make us feel as we read the scanty record of their genealogy that we are in the presence of mysterious demigods. No honest man can but confess that he often reads these unparalleled narratives with an inner questioning as to whether these things were really so. Now, I should like you to remember the wise counsels of Lord Bacon before you give heed to any suppressed feelings of disquietude as to the real sense and value of these Biblical accounts of early human history. In introducing his method by which nature is to be viewed and safely interpreted, he warns his readers, as a preliminary to truthful investigation, against the practice of falling down before certain intellectual Deities. He says there are *four* kinds of "Idola," or false deities to which the human mind has been prone to pay homage, much to the detriment of philosophy; of these, two are the "*Idola Specus*" and the "*Idola Fani*," that is to say, the false influences of human society and of human opinions derived from fashionable, approved systems of thought. I don't accuse you of idolatry. I have not witnessed your devotions to the prevalent forms of modern intercourse and modern thought. But I think you stand on the threshold of the heathen temple when you quietly and almost unconsciously reason thus with yourselves: "We of this generation are decent people, clothed in the best woollens and silks our manufacturers can produce; our homes are solid and substantial as well as ornate, far removed from those which the birds enjoy among leafy bowers, and more cosy than the soft warm lair of the hare as she sleeps with open eyes in the thick tender grass. When we are weary with a toil more conducive to national wealth than pruning olive trees or eating choice fruits, we seek the welcome society of the drawing room, or plunge heart and soul into the last racy book of the season. If we feel sad and weak and are conscious of yearning after the Invisible One, we read the wonderful Book which tells us of Him who came to give rest to the weary, or we join those like minded with ourselves in a noble

How yet, by a man's ed. you been sw— "partial to Israel did not you hangier

sanctuary to offer solemn worship to the Great Unseen, whose Voice no man knows, and whose Form none have gazed upon. And if ever we feel perplexed as to what had better be done in the hour of trial, we at once fall back on the history of our race, or confer with grave fathers and saintly mothers who have often listened to delusive voices and detected the lie they covered. We have a God,—but we never see him. We have a conscience—but it is rich in the lessons of experience. There are snares in life, but they entangle our feet unawares; the world is big and its people are numerous; the ways of Providence are orderly,—we are the people. As it is now: so it was in the beginning and ever was from the days of Adam, back to the hour when the same old earth began its endless roll, and the same bright sun shed its beams to show to the old earth its proper course through the universe.”

Now, observe according to the tendency of this process of thought, Adam was, of course, born in a proper way just as you were. His wife was the daughter of somebody else, and in no way intimately connected with himself. They were brought together by a respectable clergyman, united in bonds sealed by the laws of the State. They read, as the evening came on, the poems of some antediluvian Tennyson, or discussed the latest fashions from Havilah. They derived wonderful help in the secret temptations which came upon them from listening to an eloquent preacher who knew how both to warn and encourage them; and when they longed to know the Great Father who made them and to tell him their joys and sorrows, they looked up to the broad Heavens to see His form, and hearkened with bated breath amidst the rustling of the forest leaves, to catch a sound of His voice,—but they saw and heard Him not; for, had He not long ago appeared to their ancestors and told them all His Will, and showed them once for all how to live a holy and happy life?

I tell you frankly, young men, that I don't know of any modern intellectual folly more perfect than that of tacitly making our notion of life, as it is in its developed form in the 19th century, the criterion by which to judge of the accuracy of the narrative which reveals to us the beginning of life, when the great web of human history first began to spin itself out. I should like to see some persons write a history of the origin, manners, trials and sorrows of our first ancestors. If they did not make them a fashionable pair, blessed with all the appliances of home, and school, and business,—what would they make them out to be? Would they say: “And it came to pass that after the earth had been peopled for ten thousand years, by all sorts of beasts with legs and without legs, one day, a jackdaw or an ancestor of the modern jackdaw, as he sat on a projecting rock, heard, or thought he heard, the sound of a new voice. And as he turned his comical head to see from whence it came, he observed a huge monkey, that is to say a gorilla. Now, this gorilla's ancestors, many thousands years before, were not so upright, and not so human in appearance as he was; but a development for the better, not the worse, had gradually been going on, which issued in this one becoming what the jackdaw saw him to be. Then, after the said jackdaw had been gathered to his fathers, and another thousand years had elapsed, the lineal descendant of the said Gorilla, by dwelling too much in caves and under shady places, had lost nearly all his hairy covering, and the strange

voice once heard had, by frequent exercise in shouting to the parrots, been developed into a more distinct utterance, and could even, when the creature was pleased with the sweetness of the apples he ate, be modulated into a whistle which caused envy among the birds of the air. Now, it also happened, many years after this, that this wonderfully developed creature looking for a mate, one day met with her beneath an overhanging vine, whither both had been attracted by desire for food. Whereupon seeing no other creature could understand their marvellous voice, they entered into a solemn league and covenant to abandon for ever the woods and groves, and live a decent life, and found a great and noble family to which they would give the honorable name of 'Man.' And so, it came to pass that our first parents begat children more perfect in smoothness, in voice, and in uprightness of backbone than themselves, built houses, planted gardens, raised factories, studied philosophy, in short entered upon civilized life !"

It is necessary to put vague notions into words, in some such way as this, in order that you may see into what tangles they must get, who, making ideas of life derived from our modern civilization the standard by which to judge of the early forms of society, feel uneasy in accepting the Bible narrative of the origin of man, and of the simplicity of his material condition and moral discipline. Don't fancy that by setting aside difficulties in the Mosaic account you can get into a mental sphere clear of all difficulty. That is a great delusion. Remember that whatever view be taken of the origin of man, the earliest state of man must, in external circumstances and moral training, differ greatly from his state in these ages of ripe civilization ; but in the earliest and the latest stages he physically and mentally is MAN. The Indian who lives half naked, is ignorant of legislative and other arts, in the prairie, is no less a man than the Prime Minister of Britain or the President of the United States,—though in circumstances they are as wide as the poles asunder. What sort of a creature would people have God made in the first instance and by what methods? Is the Infinite One to be regulated in His creative actions by our notions of what would be great and becoming? Are the crude notions of what man's creation ought to have been, more presentable than the record given in the Bible?

Because God has formed us by a gradual process must He of necessity have abstained from framing the first man by an act of absolute creation? Because we find a help-meet who is of our own race, ready for us with a full consciousness of a common origin by descent, must the Almighty be prevented from creating one for the first man, in such a way as to make him and her feel that they are of a common origin and bound together by ties most sacred? Because God has given us His Word to point out our dangers and to aid us in the work of loving obedience, must He be debarred from appointing to Adam, when books had no existence, and when there were no defences of a rich and long experience to fall back upon, a definite rule of life that would tend to remind him of his dependence, nourish the new born sense of responsibility and lessen his dangers by concentrating them on one point? Because God has been manifested in Christ, and through Him spoken to us, reasoned with us, made us feel that He is ever near and accessible,—must He therefore not be allowed, by our modern fancies, to appear in definite

form to those who most needed to be informed of the existence of a God, and to speak to them in language suitable to their condition? Because we are subjected to divine restraints by the action of conscience, by the action of physical law, by the action of human society, by the action of the church of which we are members, must therefore the transgression of Adam be visited by no chastisement of an open form, but be confined to the simple action of only one force—conscience? I say when you read these narratives bear in mind that you have to do with life in its beginnings; and therefore, expect to meet with what you will never find when society is organized, disciplined and enjoying the advantages of ample instruction from the experience of ages, and the voice of God in His Word.

3. *The early narratives are to be looked at in relation to subsequent events.*

The Bible is not a history of the world; but a history of man in his relation to God. It does not pretend to give us all details that may be needful to see some of the related events in a clear light. It comes to us with authority, as from God—and we are bound to receive it on the assertion of that authority and not on the ground of independent enquiries. If our reasoning powers are to be exercised in relation to this subject—it is first in the examination of the evidences that exist in support of such authority having been asserted. If in the result, we find that God has never claimed to be the author of these books, then we can approach and examine them just as we would any others. But if we find, by the exercise of our reason, that He has claimed authority of a certain range here, then our duty is to read subject to the influence of this fact, and to use our reason to find out the interpretation which He would have us put upon His Word. That interpretation may be more or less free, as we comprehend the scope and character of the sanction which God has given to the narratives recorded; but the Bible will be regarded as God's version of the history of man in relation to Himself.

Approaching the early portions of the Bible under this light, you will find a principle of selection, in the choice of the events recorded as distinguished from those events that are passed by in silence. The ruling design in the account of creation, is clearly to set forth the truth that the Creator of all things is the being with whom man has to do in his obedience and disobedience. Man's life in the garden of Eden and during the subsequent years of sorrow and toil, is only depicted in those few points which bear upon his relation to God as holy and as sinful. The ten thousand matters of human earthly interest which affected Adam and Eve and their children are not mentioned. The allusion to the family quarrel which issued in the death of Abel, seems to rest on the fact that the portentous development of sin, on the one side, and the growth of domestic piety on the other, must be recorded. At a time when the human body was free from the numerous ailments which the diseases and struggles and sufferings of hundreds and thousands of years have handed down to us, men attained naturally to a very fine old age—an arrangement of Providence, no doubt, that men might multiply very fast and not allow the earth to be pre-possessed by the brute creation. But

out of the thousands who in those strange times paced the virgin earth and made a sensation among their kindred, only the names, of those are included in the genealogical lists who are in the direct line of descent from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham and Christ. The world must have been populous in the time of Noah, but you will observe that the only event in human history laid hold of by the sacred historian is that of the deluge, and this not because it was a deluge,—but because it was expressive of the sad deterioration of men in their relation to God. In like manner you may run through the book and it will appear that the principle of selection which regulates the writer is—the bearing of what occurred on the unfolding of God's mercy to man in the person of Christ our Saviour.

In connexion with this I may remark, that by reason of the necessary brevity of the narrative and in strict accordance with this principle of selection, many circumstances are omitted, which, if known, would doubtless clear away difficulties which under present circumstances must be kept for future solution. I remember how Sir H. Holland, in a volume published some years since, tells of the perplexities and confusions of astronomers as they pursued their observations and reckonings within the limits of the solar system. They were constantly baffled in their calculations by something they could neither see nor prove. They knew that the facts of astronomy were real, but they could not make them consistent one with another. What did they do? Did they cast aside the solar system as an old worn out machine that would not work in order? Did they become sceptics as to the reality of astronomy being a perfect science? Did they fret against the author of the Universe for creating such difficulties as were beyond their solution? No; for they were sensible men, whose strength “was” to be still. They waited in hope, and in due time there was discovered a planet which accounted for all the perturbations they had observed, and which when seen, restored order and perfection to what before was all confusion and incompleteness. And so, depend upon it, there are many things out of sight which, were they known, would remove some of the difficulties now often felt. And it is the path of prudence to hold fast by the facts given us as parts of a great system; remembering that as ignorance of the proximity of one planet does not annihilate the existence and orderliness of another planet, though its orderliness may not be apparent,—so the absence of certain knowledge of some things that took place does not prove that other things, of which we are told but cannot fully comprehend, did not occur.

4. *The principle which regulates God's manifestations of Himself is one though the form may be various.*

I imagine that all will admit that, in some way or other, God does manifest Himself to his creatures without intermission through the long course of the ages. He does not leave us as orphans compelled to cry out for ever after a Father who is as good as dead. We are, in our brightest and best moods, sensible of a need of enlightenment and guidance in order to attain to a position of clearer vision and deeper satisfaction. And I am sure it is true that the rule of the Divine manifestations in all ages is *one*—namely, the need of our ordinary processes of thought and ordinary sources of knowledge

being supplemented by a light which comes direct from the Father of Lights. The principle that regulates the revelation of God's will to man is ever this—Light for the guidance of man's conduct according to the emergency of his position, He gives to men because they cannot do their life work without His gifts.

But that being so, who is to lay down the law that the Eternal Who has at His disposal all resources, Who formed the ear and caused the tongue to speak and gave power of vision to the eye, shall be restricted to one particular line of communication! If man's personal need of guidance gives scope for the principle of aid from on High, does not the shifting character of man's need give scope for shifting forms in the bestowment of that aid? In the present day God does not assume any form on which our eye can rest; He speaks not in any tone that falls on our sense of hearing. No strange mysterious Being meets us on our door step as met Abraham at the door of his tent, and we hold no wondrous converse with a visible Deity, visiting us in the cool of the day, and why? Because, having the revealed Will of God in Scripture as the sure Regulative Guide of all our ways and thoughts, and being inheritors of a full experience of His dealings, we have no need of anything more than that the silent and invisible action of His Spirit should be felt on ours that we may, thereby, know the perfect Will of God. He meets our need by written Revelation, supplemented by such illumination of the Holy Spirit as may enable us to appreciate its import. In the days of Peter, James and John there was almost an absence of visible displays of the Divine presence, because they did not need them after the recent manifestation of God in Christ Jesus. When further back, Jewish Society was developed to an extent that personal manifestations to be a guide to men must be as numerous as the men, the wants of the erring nation were met by God speaking to them through the mouth of a few select prophets; and when more remotely still, the nation was being first consolidated under Moses, the "light of life" shone on the people almost entirely through his agency. But when you go back to the patriarchal days, there being no books, no prophets, no Saviour visible or represented, the love of God must necessarily show itself in communications to the heads of the families if not to the individual members; and still further, when you place yourself in thought amidst the solitudes of Eden, the question naturally comes, if Adam and Eve needed teaching as surely as we all do, how and in what way could the enlightenment be most certainly conveyed? I say most *certainly*, yes; that is, so as not to be confounded with the imaginings of their own minds. Necessarily if God was to bless them with guidance and an impressive sense of their dependance on Himself, it must be by manifesting His presence and Will in such forms of speech and appearance as would be recognized and valued. And I want to know whether there is any inconsistency in Him Who made the eye of man, and Who in the days of Christ became man, appearing in visible form to His first children. And as to God entering into detailed conversation with Adam and Cain and Noah, does He not do all things in detail? Does not His eye rest on every hair of your head? Is not every distinct atom upheld by His power? Did not Christ, God manifest in the flesh, enter fully, into the particular sorrows of men? Do we not find our consolation in this that as a Father pitieth his

children so does the Lord pity them that fear Him? Away then, with that hard, cold, unphilosophical, absurd notion which represents the Great Father as absorbed in the vast affairs of other worlds, too proud to bend to our frail state, and afraid of the public opinion of grand angels and archangels in case He condescends to tell Adam of his sins, and speak to him of things to come! We love and honour the King Eternal, Who bends to men of low degree, raises the poor from the dust, attends to the sighing of the prisoner, and adapts His communications of warning, guidance, or comfort to the changing circumstances of His children.

5. *There is a remarkable resemblance between the main features of the early Revelations contained in Genesis and the Revelations of the New Testament.*

You remember that one of the most conspicuous items in the truth revealed in the first chapter of Genesis is, that man was formed out of the dust of the ground. Now I maintain that that representation is more consistent with the character of the Creator as revealed in Scripture, than any theory of evolution or developement can be. Why should men think it a strange thing that God the Almighty should form a human body out of the dust of the earth? Has not the Creator *in his own Nature* all the forces which, coming out from his Nature at the bidding of His own Will, can make, by an acceleration of processes beyond our thought, a living frame, and is not all development an outcome of the Divine Nature. Does not the Eternal contain within Himself the primal germ of all laws and forces? A point I more especially allude to is this, that the account in Genesis is of the same class as the Revelations of the New Testament, which declare as plainly as can be, that our new and more glorious bodies, on the resurrection day, shall be formed in like manner from the dust of the earth into which they will have fallen. The act of creation will then be repeated in your instance and mine.

Then, also, the visible display of cherubim, which barred the entrance to the blissful seat after our parents had left it, was not only suited to their primitive and simple ways of life—but has its counterpart in that visible public manifestation before men and angels, when God manifest in the flesh, amidst the gloom of the skies and the rockings of the earth, fell a sacrifice on our behalf and burst open as a glorious conqueror, the gates of a more blissful Paradise to all believers. And, if sometimes fastidious and narrow-visioned readers, are staggered at the unwonted familiarity and persistency of Abraham with the Divine Being, when he pleaded for Sodom and obtained a promise of deliverance on account even of ten righteous ones, let us remember that very holy men can plead with God as none others can or dare, and that the Father does give special heed to the request of those who love Him most intensely. But in addition to this consideration do not forget how, when God dwelt among men, John was permitted as the beloved one to lean on Emmanuel's bosom, and to ask Him questions which none other dare. And finally, not to multiply instances, in the warning specific and impressive, which God gave to the people in the days of Noah, and in the fearful disaster which subsequently came upon them, great and awful as it was,—we have in the New Testament a revelation of something of the same character, only more

stupendous and sweeping, in the allusions to the end of all things, when the elements shall melt with fervent heat and the earth and heavens shall pass away

I have now I trust said enough to point out how some of the peculiarities which we find in the early Revelations of God's Will and Ways, are both natural under the circumstances in which they occurred, and wise and considerate to those who were the objects of them. I have shown that we must weigh all that is involved in the fact of the records being the most ancient in existence; that they relate to life and action in their beginnings and not in their full development; that the events narrated are so related out of millions of other events on the principle of their being connected with the history of man in his relation to God, and culminating in the life and death of Christ; that God always manifests Himself on the one broad rule of meeting the spiritual need of His creatures, the particular form of the manifestation being regulated by the condition and circumstances of the parties concerned; and finally, that we have in the New Testament Revelations important resemblances with those in Genesis.

I have done my work, imperfectly I know, for the subject is great and complicated. I have done it not to convince you of what perhaps you were not convinced of; for I have very little hope of convincing any one on the most sacred subjects apart from the influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart to make it lowly and penitent. My desire has been to furnish you with a few general principles, by the wise application of which you may be able to read that remarkable portion of the word of God with greater advantage. The longer I live the more am I convinced that young men and old men, maidens and mothers, cannot better promote their highest earthly interest than by a study and prayerful use of the Bible. I have known, as you may have known, lives almost thrown away for even this world, because they were not imbued with the Spirit that pervades this Book. We know it has fashioned some of the noblest characters that have adorned the world, has fired with a quenchless and holy enthusiasm, men and women who have by their blameless lives and beneficent deeds proved the greatest benefactors of their race, and has brought full and abiding consolation to orphans in their woe, widows in their desolation, heart-stricken parents in their bereavements, and strong and hale men whose spirit has been bowed down with a consciousness of guilt; and, consequently on these grounds, as on others, we have ample reason to hold by this blessed light, that it may guide our trembling feet through the dark and dangerous paths of our pilgrimage down to the over-shadowed valley, from which, under the leadership of One who has trodden the road before, we hope to emerge in a fair and lovely land where the glorious light that fills and gladdens all, shall, by its unfailing splendour and sweetness, obliterate from our thoughts the traces of days of darkness, danger and defeat.